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ABSTRACT

New concerns of both foreign students in the United States and American students abroad are discussed. Two major concerns are admissions policies and procedures, and the evaluation of foreign credentials. There is a substantial increase in the number of foreign students studying in the United States currently. This increase in numbers has caused many institutions to deny admission to foreign students in order to maintain a given level of foreign students and also a well-diversified ethnic population within those numbers. Large numbers of students coming to the United States have other than traditional academic credentials (i.e., teacher education and vocational/commercial/technical credentials). Confusion exists concerning what criteria should be used to evaluate credentials of foreign students. The need for established policies for reviewing credentials of foreign athletes is noted. Generally speaking, there are about one-third the number of U.S. students studying abroad than there are foreign students studying in the United States. Reasons for the difference include the lack of motivated foreign language training in the United States and the devaluation of the dollar and its allied effects on living abroad. Additional issues concern an attempt in New York State to make testing agencies accountable and investigations by federal agencies of coaching schools. There is a need for specialists trained to handle the complex aspects of international education. (SW)

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION
OF COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION BOARD
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

GARY W. HOPKINS
OCTOBER 1979

The Changing International Scene - New Concerns Expanded Services for American and Foreign Students

Let me begin by saying that it is a privilege to be speaking to you today as a representative of the Advisory Committee on International Education of the College Board and an honor to be chosen from the ranks of many other qualified international educators to present a view on the topic at hand.

There is no one in the audience today who is not influenced by activities in the international arena. In fact, there is no longer any such thing as a national arena. I need only to mention gasoline, food, and the effects of the gold market on world inflation rates to illustrate my point.

It is therefore fitting, proper, and necessary that we devote time to discuss an aspect of that international arena, international education, which contributes to the planning, management, and distribution of that gasoline, the food, and the gold in the future. In short, the area that deals with the future leaders in our world.

My specific function today is to introduce and describe some new concerns of both American and foreign students, and my colleague, Nancy Wilson Young, will identify some of the available resources to address those concerns.

I was pleased to note that this session shows concern for both foreign and domestic (American) students by using the term international -- a term which indeed reflects the two-way process involved. Although there exists similarities among the concerns of both foreign and domestic students, I feel that the differences among the concerns involved merit speaking about each group separately.

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To talk about new concerns of foreign students, one must, I feel, look at some of the historical concerns that have been with us since we admitted our first foreign student well over 100 years ago. These concerns may be new to some educators who are just becoming involved in the process of dealing with foreign students, but for those who have been involved for some time, they will be recognized as old friends who seem to continually drop in at the wrong times in our busy schedules.

I will mention only two of those major continuing concerns for foreign students and dwell only briefly on each one. These two major concerns are: admissions policies and procedures, and the evaluation of foreign credentials. What are some of the questions foreign students have with regard to admissions policies and procedures? For example, how many students does an institution admit and from what countries? Are there limitations imposed by country, by major, by financial need or some other criterion or combination of these factors? Who at the institution does the admitting? Are these individuals aware of as well as sensitive to the problems inherent in foreign student admissions such as mail and distance problems, exchange rates, and other financial concerns, and the cultural and language problems involved? If not, it is easy to understand why foreign students are concerned and ask these questions.

There is little doubt about the substantial increase in the number of foreign students studying in the United States currently. The latest Open Doors, published by the Institute of International Education (IIE), estimates that there were some 235,000 foreign students studying in the

U.S. during the 1977-78 school year.[1] This number, however, does not reflect the suspected large number of Iranian students now in the U.S. due to the political turmoil there. Open Doors indicated some 35,000 Iranians[2] were here studying, but estimates as high as 75,000 have been suggested, which could mean that a total of more than 300,000 foreign students are currently studying in the United States, rather than the 235,000 as reported by IIE. My point is that this increased number of foreign students has exacerbated the concerns for institutions (and therefore the foreign students involved) because the institutions want to maintain a given level of foreign students and also a well diversified ethnic population within those numbers. In other words, there are students currently being denied admission because of these concerns who might otherwise have been offered admission when there was not such a press of numbers. Students are also being denied admission due to the restrictions on the numbers entering areas such as Engineering and Business due to limited availability of spaces. My own institution has about 50% fewer foreign students this year at the undergraduate level due primarily to the inability to admit them to these two sought after majors. I am sure that we are not unique in this situation.

Additional admissions related concerns would be the larger number of students coming to the U.S. with other than traditional academic credentials, i.e., teacher education and vocational/commercial/technical credentials. Foreign students now want to know if their credentials are viewed as the equivalent of high school or post-secondary level in the U.S. Many also want credit for what they consider to be superior high school preparation. The resultant concern is that many admissions

personnel do not know what criteria should be used to determine whether or not a given credential is equivalent to a high school diploma in the U.S. and/or whether or not it should merit advanced standing credit. Given the cultural and related factors of admitting students from abroad, do we have a serious obligation to view a foreign student's high school preparation in terms of their selected major, perhaps even more so than for the American student? In my mind, we have no latitude to do otherwise. However, some institutions naively admit foreign students to programs when they would not admit an American student to that program with similar credentials. We must act cautiously about the feeling that something "foreign" is somehow better and deserves special consideration that we would not offer to our American students.

The topic of the evaluation of credentials leads me to one of the most frustrating and long standing concerns of U.S. educators and therefore for foreign students. In a March, 1923 issue of School and Society there appeared an article concerning "bonafide" students. It stated that "until a more definite agreement has been reached between American institutions of higher education and evaluation of other foreign degrees, each foreign student's statement will have to stand upon its individual merits."[3] As early as the 1920's then, a major problem was that each institution was evaluating individually credentials those students presented for review. In a June, 1947 article in the "Events Section" also of School and Society, we find a statement indicating that

> "the large number of foreign students who have already come to the United States and an increasing number who are expected to seek admission to American institutions of higher education in the future raised a serious and difficult problem with assessing their educational credentials."[4]

The author of this particular article, I. L. Kandel, ends by saying, "only by some concentrated attack on this problem can the variety of standards now employed on the admission of foreign students be eliminated."[5] That was in 1947; today in 1979, over 30 years later, we are still struggling to address some of the major concerns regarding the manner in which we determine equivalency of foreign credentials. We are still attempting to develop a set of guidelines acceptable to both those providing evaluation and to those requesting the evaluation.

Although the two preceding examples of foreign students concerns are historical in nature, their effects can still be felt today. For example, I am sure that many of you in the audience have found yourself in the following position. Foreign students, who when finding out that they are not admissible or when discovering that they will not obtain credit for work they believe they deserve, accuse you of not understanding nor accepting their educational system, because (and I want to emphasize the because), another institution has admitted them and/or offered credit for their foreign credentials. The frustrating part of this example is the knowledge that you have done the demanding, time-consuming process of evaluating their credentials and determined that they are weak academically and/or that their credentials do not merit advanced standing, while your colleague at that other institution, has done little or nothing in the way of evaluating their records in terms of the U.S. system. And for your efforts in doing a professional job, you receive verbal and written abuse!

As an international educator, I am extremely concerned about this area of credential evaluation and as a doctoral candidate in Comparative Education at the University of Maryland, I am serious in pursuing this area for my dissertation topic. I don't expect to come up with THE

answer, but I do think that as educators we have a responsibility to complete scholarly research in an area that affects literally hundreds of thousands of students, if not millions when we consider immigrants and refugees.

Another concern that I recently came in contact with is one dealing with foreign student athletes being able to compete in the U.S. A small group of foreign student admissions specialists including my colleagues on the Advisory Committee on International Education, Stan Berry and Cliff Sjorgen, myself, and several others, have been given two complex tasks: (1) determining what is equivalent to a U.S. high school diploma from countries around the world, and (2) what constitutes a 2.0 average to meet that particular aspect of the NCAA regulations. Through litigation, involving a foreign student, the question of age as a factor in competition was reviewed and the result is that age can no longer affect the eligibility of an athlete, foreign or domestic, to compete. The 2.0 rule, although far from perfect in deciding eligibility of American students, does allow students, coaches, and Admissions Officers, an understandable bench mark upon which to discuss the academic area of eligibility. We hope to be able to provide guidelines that will allow the same type of understanding to develop when reviewing foreign credentials. We feel that it is highly desirable to have foreign students competing with U.S. athletes, but also feel as strongly the need to have established policies and procedures to insure that competition is based upon sound and equitable educational reasoning. You will be hearing more about our efforts in this area in the near future.

The concern of awarding financial aid to foreign students, athletes included, is an area that we must ask ourselves what we are teaching our students when we, for example, coach them on how to answer questions on applications for aid that result in their gaining aid, but for

which they are not truly eligible. Some have said that such practices are generally accepted abroad and thus justify their actions on some misunderstanding of a cultural difference. Such practices only add credence to the feeling around the world that unfortunately, winning or the monies from tuition and fees involved are more important to U.S. institutions than fulfilling the tenets of international educational interchange. In other words, we must address the question of whether the short term gains in terms of having a winning athletic team or the monies involved in tuition and related fees are worth the long range losses in prestige to U.S. higher education.

The question of the relevance of an American educational experience is something we find on the minds of many foreign students today. What are the employment prospects of my particular field at this time, students ask? Students want to know how institutions handle their individual concerns with prospective employers. This is a particularly relevant concern when considering the increasingly higher cost of U.S. higher education. Because of the high cost involved, this concern arises in international educators also because of the fact that we are admitting an unrepresentative sample of foreign students to our institutions. Those who come generally have either rank, privilege, or wealth, which may be exacerbating the problem of educating only an elite segment of those eligible academically for higher education around the world. Do we have an obligation to consider this concern in formulating admissions policies and procedures? I know we do, and suggest that institutions seriously consider this concern in establishing their philosophical basis for the admission of foreign nationals.

We are all aware of the decline in the number of 18 year olds graduating from U.S. high schools and the resulting willingness of many U.S. institutions to admit foreign students, some of which had few if any foreign students previous to this enrollment crunch. The effects of the enrollment crunch brings to mind the I-20 issue and, in general, the whole issue of ethical practices involved in the recruitment admission of foreign students. As my colleague, Gary Hoover, said at a session on the recruitment of foreign students at the most recent National Association for Foreign Student Affairs Annual Conference, "Have I-20, Will Travel!"[6] What happens to foreign students admitted to institutions that use unscrupulous headhunters and who do not have programs of studies promised, and additionally, do not have the specialized supportive services for foreign students such as credential analysts, English language specialists, foreign student advising specialists, etc. to assist in getting their educational plans straightened out or by transferring to institutions that do have those supportive services? Unfortunately, many join the ranks of illegal aliens or create problems for institutions who do have such services by showing up on their door step requesting assistance not available at their home institutions.

For those of you involved in foreign student recruiting, it is imperative that you be familiar with the publication: Guidelines for the Recruitment of Foreign Students. This publication was developed for the College Entrance Examination Board by its Advisory Counsel on International Education. It is available free of charge from the College Board and it has by the way, been sent to every President and Director of Admissions at all two and four year accredited institutions in the United States; some 3,000 plus institutions.

These few concerns illustrate some of the problems that foreign students currently and historically face in the United States. It is not obviously, a comprehensive list. Time precludes addressing more than these few to illustrate the major problem areas.

Let us now turn to the concerns of American students abroad. In terms of numbers, U.S. students abroad are estimated to be in the range of 100,000 students. This figure comes from a personal conversation with Barbara Burn, a member of the Advisory Committee on International Education and Executive Director of the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Education. Barbara felt that although hard data is difficult to obtain because IIE stopped printing this type of information in 1972, 100,000 would be an acceptable figure to talk about when discussing U.S. students abroad. There are then, generally speaking, about one-third the number of U.S. students studying abroad than there are foreign students studying in the United States. Why the difference?

One factor in this difference is certainly the lack of motivated foreign language training in the United States. Instead, we force foreign students to learn English well enough to pursue higher studies here, but make arrangements for our own students to go abroad and never have to speak the host country language. Many U.S. students go abroad in programs that teach in English, provide housing where no host language is required, and limit exposure to the host country to field trips with other U.S. students and faculty. There is no need then, for an individual to learn the host language. As a result, their experience is severely limited.

Another concern for U.S. students is the devaluation of the dollar and its allied effects on living abroad. Even though most foreign

education is vastly cheaper than in the U.S., it is the cost of living abroad that precludes many students from even considering the limited exposure in current U.S. programs abroad alluded to previously. The inability to work, seen by many of us as a retaliatory move by foreign governments to the restrictions put upon foreign students working here in the United States, only makes a bad situation worse economically.

The desire by U.S. students to go abroad, however, seems to be increasing, and when there is money to be made, you can be sure that there will be those individuals more interested in making money than in providing an educational experience for students. There is then, a concern that students, or their institutions for those students, use the utmost care in selecting those programs that have a record of providing a worthwhile educational experience. We have all read about the students who were stranded when a charter plane that was supposed to be there, wasn't, or the comprehensive fee that turned out not to cover many basic items such as food, travel, and housing. It may sound like common sense, but I think many of you are aware of students that have been greatly disappointed because they did not take the time or have their institution investigate the program prior to actually going abroad.

Because of oil money and a desire for the opportunity for higher education, many countries have experienced a tremendous increase in the number of their students wanting to enter higher education. These increased numbers have in some cases, resulted in American students being denied admission to make room for their own students. This is not only in the field of medicine about which we have seen considerable publicity recently, but other areas that traditionally were not

restricted to students from the U.S.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the concerns voiced by American students and their counselors, who are in Department of Defense Schools or International Schools Abroad. We are told that some students who when they return to the U.S. after a considerable time abroad encounter serious difficulties. Although the English language is not generally a problem when returning to the states, the ability to function in a society that is in some respects totally different from what they have been used to, is a serious difficulty. We need to have Admissions Officers who have been abroad, or through exposure to students at their institutions that have lived abroad for some time and explained their special needs as American students abroad, to be aware of those special needs. All of us need to be sensitive to and knowledgeable about these special needs if we are to serve such students effectively.

And finally, let me mention two current concerns that involve both foreign and domestic students. I refer first to legislation recently passed in New York State with regard to "Truth - In - Testing." An effort to make testing agencies accountable has resulted in a number of changes in the testing that will be offered in New York. Additional costs to students, limited testing dates and test sites and outright refusal to offer some tests, such as professional school examinations, are some of the results of that legislation to date. We will, I am sure, be seeing more changes after this initial year has passed and as additional states consider such legislation.

For those of you who may not be aware of it, there is a special 90 minutes session on this topic Tuesday afternoon at 2:30 in the Imperial Ballroom.

The investigation of Coaching Schools by federal agencies has resulted in concern and anxiety for both foreign and domestic students, since the tests involved are required by most U.S. institutions. The effects of these investigations and resulting changes, if any, in the tests or uses of the tests will be closely watched by all of us engaged in International Education.

In closing, let me voice a concern expressed by both foreign students and domestic students, as well as those of us involved in International Educational Exchange. That concern centers around the lack of commitment by institutions at all levels to recognize the need for specialists trained to handle the complex and ever changing aspects of international education. Unfortunately, the first place many administrators look to cut costs in tight financial situations happens to be in the international area. We have failed as educators to convince the American public as an example, of the need for increased foreign language training at the secondary level or the need to begin foreign language training for what little there currently is at an early age. At the post-secondary level, we have also failed to convince presidents and others in decision-making positions that it is essential to have individuals who can effectively handle the difficult aspects of credential evaluations, immigration and other governmental policies and procedures, evaluation and assistance with English language training, etc. To illustrate, let me ask each of you in the audience to reflect on how these areas are handled at your own institution. Is the responsibility for working with the admission of foreign students assigned to the newest Admissions Officer with the least experience, and then reassigned each time a promotion or a vacancy occurs? Does this also happen in the area of foreign

student advising? Are these assignments given as any other assignments are given and not considered an area that requires special skills and techniques; if so, your institution is contributing to our concern to all those students, foreign and domestic, that you admit. You will hear shortly about services available to train staff, at little or no cost to an institution, to become experienced in many of these specialized areas. However, that training is in vain if it is not recognized that the responsibility for an area like foreign student admissions needs to be handled by one of the most, not least experienced Admissions Officers, and when a promotion does come for that trained individual, that area of responsibility should be included with the new responsibilities involved.

I leave you with a plea: to work effectively in having these specialized areas recognized as such, and filled with individuals sensitive to, aware of, and concerned about international education.

## NOTES

[1]Open Doors 1972: Report on International Educational Exchange (New York: Institute of International Education, 1972), p. 14.

[2]Ibid.

[3]"The Admission of Foreign Students to the United States," School and Society 17 (March 24, 1923), p. 322.

[4]I. L. Kandel, "Educational Equivalents for Foreign Students," School and Society Vol. 65 (June 1, 1947), p. 420.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Gary Hoover, "The Ethics and Techniques of Foreign Student Recruitment: A Preliminary Report of the ADSEC Task Force on Recruitment," NAFSA National Conference, 1979 (Unpublished Report).